

Kent County Report

Dispatch Center Grows, Looks at Upgrades

Kent County Board Considers Increasing 911 Surcharge

On July 1, Kent County Dispatch assumed responsibility for responding to 911 calls for emergency services in the City of Wyoming. Dispatchers also monitor the location and time-on-scene for police and fire crews responding to emergencies. Wyoming reported just over 28,000 police calls and 5,370 fire calls last year; Kent County Dispatch is now assuming that workload.

The Kent County Sheriff Department now provides fire and police call taking and dispatch services for all local units of government in Kent County, except the City of Grand Rapids which operates its own dispatch center. This comes at a time when the County looks to upgrade technology to better respond to incidents. These upgrades



are critical to ensure continued dispatch interoperability (calls between communities and first responders) moving forward. Both dispatch centers currently offer redundancy to one another in the event one of the centers is rendered inoperable. Upgraded technology is required to allow for expanded back-up capabilities and increased call volume surge protection moving forward.

Currently a County surcharge of \$0.45 is levied monthly on devices that have the ability to access emergency services, such as cell and land-line phones. Over the past several months, the Sheriff Department and County Administrator's Office have investigated asking voters to consider a dispatch surcharge increase on the November 2016 ballot. The goal is to fund capital costs associated with upgrading County dispatch operations to an 800 MHz system and fully subsidize countywide fire dispatch costs. The technology upgrades are estimated to cost approximately \$25 million. This would also cover associated equipment costs for the entire County (including the City of Grand Rapids). Roughly 70 percent of the purchase price will be used to cover costs related to upgrades to radio towers and dispatch hardware.

Even after the potential surcharge increase, County residents will continue to be paying on the low end for dispatch services in comparison to many other comparable counties within the State. The Board is expected to vote later this month to determine if the surcharge increase will appear on the ballot in November.



Sheriff Department Community Alerts

Register to receive information by email or text messaging about incidents that may impact the places where you live, work, and play.

Alerts include details about road closures, missing persons and recent crime trends.

Register at:

accesskent.com/CommAlerts

Dedication Scheduled for Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail



The Dedication Ceremony for the Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail will be held on Wednesday, July 6, 2016 at 11 a.m. at Millennium Park. The Trail connects the Hansen Nature Trail to a popular loop surrounding the main lake at the Park. Funding for the project was donated in memory of Sandy Hansen, a passionate park supporter who passed away in January 2014.

The Hansen Nature Trail is a crushed limestone path loop at the northeast corner of Butterworth Drive and Riverbend SW. It explores scenic ponds and wetlands in the 1,500 acre Millennium Park. The area is filled with birds and mammals, a variety of native and non-native trees around the Park, unique ponds, wildflowers and native plants. The Sandy Hansen Shoreline Trail offers a 1.9 mile paved trail loop, connecting the Park's main recreational area to the far side of the central lake and back. With the link provided by the new wetlands boardwalk, trail users can easily branch off the Shoreline Trail to explore and enjoy the more remote natural area.

Sandy Hansen is remembered for her passion for nature and birds, and was a long-time supporter of the Kent County Parks Foundation. Her husband of 49 years, Dick Hansen, along with their three children and eleven grandchildren, pledged this gift in Sandy's honor to memorialize her love of nature. Dick and Sandy Hansen previously funded construction of the Hansen Nature Trail that travels through the unique natural fen at the western edge of the Park. Learn more about our parks at kentcountyparks.org.



Transition Complete, Airport Flies Under New Authority

Officials at the County and Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GRFIA) welcomed Susan Mowery-Schalk, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Manager of the Great Lakes Region, as she finalized a two year project: transferring control of the Airport from the County to a newly-created Airport Authority. Kent County had owned and governed the Airport for 52 years until the final approval on July 1, 2016.

The Airport generates more than \$3.1 billion in economic impact to the region. "Kent County prides itself on making decisions that are best for the entire community," said Jim Saalfeld, Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners. "The Gerald R. Ford Airport is a regional asset for all of West Michigan. In that regard, the County knows the best long term move for the Airport is to be operated by a regional authority that includes representation from outside of the County. This is another great example of collaboration by Kent County at many levels."

The process to transfer the Airport to an Authority started in 2014. Several key Commissioners helped foster the process, including Dan Koorndyk, Roger Morgan, Richard VanderMolen and Ted Vonk. The transition also required State legislative approval in 2015. State Representative Rob VerHeulen introduced legislation that was approved unanimously in both the State House and Senate and was signed by Governor Rick Snyder. The County and Airport staffs worked hard to make the transition a seamless one.



Left to right: Acting President and CEO of the GRFIA Authority Phillip Johnson, GRFIA Authority Chair and County Commissioner Roger Morgan, County Commissioner Dan Koorndyk, FAA Manager Susan Mowery-Schalk, County Commission Vice-Chair Shana Shroll, and Airport Authority Board Member David Slikkers.

New Deputy Director of Equalization Will Oversee Allegan County Department

On June 23, the Board of Commissioners approved a three year agreement for Kent County's Bureau of Equalization to oversee Allegan County's Department of Equalization functions. Kent County will add a Deputy Director of Equalization position for this new collaboration. Kent County also oversees Montcalm County's Equalization function, which has resulted in standardized equalization practices in both counties.

The partnership with Allegan County will further assist in efforts to move toward common equalization practices throughout the State. Allegan County has agreed to cover any costs associated with this agreement, including the new Deputy Director of Equalization salary and costs for travel mileage.

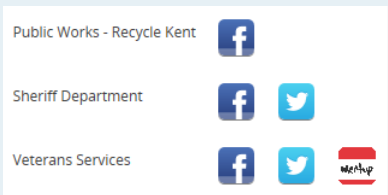


*Kent County Board of Commissioners'
Meeting on June 23, 2016.*

"The experience we gain and the blending of cultures will benefit both of our County departments," said Matt Woolford, Director of Kent County's Bureau of Equalization. "This really meets an area that the Board's Community Collaboration Work Group had investigated. One of the biggest benefits of this collaboration will be standardizing our processes in a regional manner." The agreement runs through June 30, 2019.

Commissioners Approve Ren Zone Application

Stay Connected!



Kent County Social Media sites keep you updated on what we are doing and help us reach out to the community quickly and concisely. Be sure to check out our various pages and stay informed!

Link to department sites at accessKent.com/SocialMedia today!

In a first-ever move, the Kent County Board of Commissioners approved submitting an application to create a Michigan Strategic Fund (MSF) Designated Renaissance Zone in Gaines Charter Township. The 15-year agreement means the County and Township agree to forego taxes under the General Property Tax Act for the duration of the designation and to enter a Payment in lieu of Taxes (PILT) agreement with Switch, Ltd.

Switch, a Nevada-based company, wants to put its eastern US data center in the former Steelcase pyramid building in Gaines Township. Switch estimates that it will invest \$151 million in equipping the building and create 103 full-time jobs in the first phase of the project. Staff from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation and The Right Place, Inc. identified Switch as a good candidate for Renaissance Zone support.

To be eligible for the designation, a community has to be “distressed.” Gaines Township does not qualify, so Kent County must serve as the applicant. The State requires the County and Gaines Township to adopt resolutions agreeing to forego the taxes they receive from the property.



The measure was approved unanimously by the Board of Commissioners on Thursday, June 23. Gaines Township Board is scheduled to vote on the agreements July 11, 2016, and the application will be considered by the MSF Board on July 26, 2016.

Kent County Board of Commissioners' & Administrator's Office

300 Monroe Avenue NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

accessKent.com



Kent County Mission Statement

The mission of Kent County government is to be an effective and efficient steward in delivering quality services for our diverse community. Our priority is to provide mandated services, which may be enhanced and supplemented by additional services to improve the quality of life for all our citizens within the constraints of sound fiscal policy.